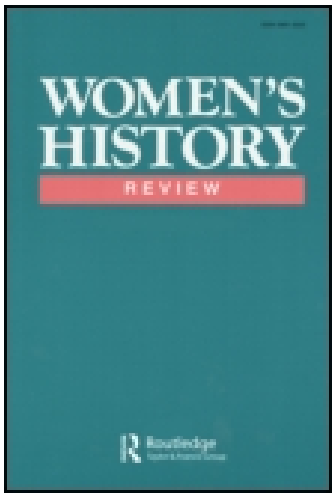

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Help for housewives: domestic service and the reconstruction of domesticity in Britain, 1940-50

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Help for Housewives: domestic service and the reconstruction of domesticity in Britain, 1940-50

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ABSTRACT This article argues that examining the debates over domestic science that took place in the late 1940s can produce insights into the ways in which gender, class and domesticity were inextricably linked and understood. The article focuses on three specific examples: a social survey of domestic service produced privately, a government report on the domestic organisation of private households, and a radio debate broadcast by the BBC Home Service.

According to her biographer, Hermione Lee, Virginia Woolf once observed that for future generations the most interesting story to be traced in her diaries might be that of her relations with her servant, Nelly Boxall. It could be that this comment is simply a typical piece of self-mockery by Woolf. However, given her lifelong struggle to resolve, at least in her own mind, the 'servant problem', this seems unlikely. Woolf, like other women of her class and generation, believed that servants were indispensable. Even when Virginia and her sister, the artist, Vanessa Bell, were bemoaning what they felt to be the 'pompous and heavy-footed' atmosphere created by a household of servants, they never seriously imagined living without them.[1] In 1924, Woolf used the changing behaviour of cooks to illustrate her perception that 'in 1910 human character changed':

> The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing-room, now to borrow the Daily Herald, now to ask advice about a hat. Do you ask for more solemn instances of the power of the human race to change?[2]

Woolf's recognition that changing social patterns could be traced in the relations of mistress and servant was not mere snobbery. It was an astute

and accurate perception about the significance of domestic service in the first half of the twentieth century. Most importantly, it locates women's lives and the middle-class home as a key site for debates about changing class relationships. This article focuses on a specific historical moment – the 1940s – and the ways in which those debates engaged with concerns about domestic organisation in the post-war world.

Discussions about how domestic work could be organised were not new. By 1940, there was a long tradition of feminist debate about issues such as domestic service, communal facilities, and the time spent on housework.[3] Government initiatives during the inter-war years had focused primarily on attempts to increase the supply of servants and interventions by women's groups and servants themselves had centred on the need to improve training, wages and conditions of service.[4] Throughout the 1940s and particularly after 1945, wider questions were raised about who had the right to domestic help and proposals were made for alternative systems of providing this. However, despite the apparent radicalism of some of the discussions conducted in the 1940s, the underlying assumptions about different groups of women remained. These assumptions took two forms, both of which secured the privileged position of middle-class women. On the one hand, it was argued that help with housework was required in order to enable educated middle-class women to make a fuller contribution to public life. On the other hand, those who advocated women's maternal and domestic role argued that help was required in order to allow (middle-class) mothers to devote themselves to rearing a stable citizenry. In the event, it was the increasing refusal of working-class women to enter any form of organised domestic service that made many of the 1940s' proposals unworkable in practice.

In this article, I focus on three specific examples of the debate: Celia Fremlin's *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* published in 1940; the *Report on Post War Organisation of Domestic Employment* produced by Violet Markham and Florence Hancock for Ernest Bevin as Minister of Labour and National Service in June 1945; and a round table discussion entitled 'Help for Housewives', chaired by Violet Markham and broadcast by the BBC Home Service in April 1946.[5]

By 1939, residential domestic service had become a predominantly female occupation, employing 24% of the female labour force in 4.8% of British households.[6] Whilst a small number of aristocratic and upper-class families continued to employ relatively large households of servants, including male footmen, valets, butlers and gardeners, the predominant pattern established in the years after the First World War was the one- or two-maid household. There were also regional disparities; the largest concentration of servant-keeping households was in the South and South-east, where in 1929 it was estimated there were 447,700 servants. In

contrast, the same figures show 68,460 servants in the whole of Wales. By 1951, only 11% of women in the labour market were classed as 'indoor domestic' – a drop of 50% in 20 years.[7]

Although there has been some debate over the precise timing of the demise of residential domestic service, there is general agreement that by the 1950s the practice of 'servant-keeping' had all but disappeared except in a few aristocratic households.[8] That this disappearance was inevitable, certainly from 1918 onwards, is assumed, with the inter-war period characterised by Pam Taylor as 'the final phase'.[9] Explanations for the decline of residential domestic service have emphasised economic factors and the changing occupational structure that accompanied these. For example, the expansion of occupational opportunities for working-class girls in retailing, clerical and factory work is frequently cited as a major reason for the increasing shortage of female servants.[10] Working-class women were quick to reject domestic service once alternative employment became available, although, of course, there were regional disparities.[11] As a result of this shortage, the cost of keeping a servant rose, particularly after 1945, and demand decreased as middle-class households found themselves unable or less willing to incur this expenditure at a time when increasing taxation and a sharp rise in the cost of living were squeezing incomes.[12] In 1949, Roy Lewis & Angus Maude published 'a critical survey of the history, present conditions and prospects of the middle classes, from whom come most of the nation's brains, leadership and organising ability' entitled *The English Middle Classes*. Lewis & Maude claimed that 'the cost of domestic service had increased more than that of any other commodity with a middle-class market – probably by 150 to 200 per cent since 1939'.[13] They concluded that:

> housewives are getting just under half the service they could afford in 1939. Queues, rationing, and lack of transport have, however, given them more to do. Middle-class women, moreover, struggle to keep up a standard of cleanliness and order in the home which was set in the years before the war.[14]

I would not deny the significance of these economic factors and changes, but the story of domestic service in the first half of the twentieth century is more uneven than is suggested by such explanations. Many middle class women continued to expect domestic help and there was considerable debate, throughout the war and afterwards, as to how this could be organised and funded. *The Lady,* a women's magazine targeted at upper-middle-class women, was still carrying advertisements for live-in maids-of-all-work, cooks and companions in 1950. Out of 131 advertisements for domestic help, only 45 were for help in institutions – the remainder were for private homes.[15] Certainly, as I shall argue, women like Violet Markham and Celia Fremlin, who spoke publicly on the subject of domestic help, did

not perceive the system as in terminal decline, although they recognised the need for radical reform.[16] Moreover, the economic explanations do not adequately account for the cultural significance of a system so pervasive and taken for granted that it appeared part of the 'natural' order. A sense of self and identity based on the practices and markers of servant-keeping was a significant element of the social positioning adopted by middle-class women.[17] As Naomi Mitchison observed in her autobiography published in 1979:

> So there we were and rooms were clean and tidy, the meals were cooked and served, orders to shops were delivered on time and there were at least three posts a day, all based on our being at the top end of the class structure.[18]

A whole chapter is devoted to domestic service in Lewis & Maude's survey of the middle classes. As they point out, 'that the problem of domestic service – or rather the lack of it – is important to the middle classes would hardly be denied by any middle-class person in Britain' and they go on to argue that 'domestic service – albeit somewhat shakily – survives, and is therefore still a matter for discussion'.[19] Lewis & Maude, writing within the egalitarian rhetoric of post-war social democracy, recognise 'anomalies' in the system of domestic service but their overriding concern is to 'justify the employment of domestic servants by the upper and middle classes'.[20] Their argument is based on the premise that 'the amount of work done within the home by the middle-class housewife is greater than that to be done by the working-class wife with the same number of children'.[21] The right to 'adequate service' by certain groups is accepted as a self-evident principle of social relations and the task of reformers is to ensure that 'the rich widow and the successful black marketeer' do not secure 'better service' than the 'hard-working professional couple with three children'.[22] Lewis & Maude make clear their preferred form of domesticity and link it firmly to their version of middle-class housewifery; a version which explicitly excludes the urban working classes. They argue that the middle-class housewife:

> normally insists upon a rather higher standard of feeding than – at any rate – the urban working-class wife. She may not spend more money on food; she tends to expend more time and care on buying; to prepare and cook more food at home; to produce, with the aid of a stock-pot, more soups and stews, as well as making more jam, bottling more fruit, and so forth. The house or flat which the middle-class housewife has to run is normally larger, and contains more belongings. Often special rooms must be looked after, such as a husband's study, studio, or consulting room, and generally a nursery.[23]

Rhetoric like that used by Lewis & Maude worked to reproduce and sustain the social relationships of domestic service by producing powerful cultural

meanings about 'good homes', 'service' and 'place'. Such meanings functioned to naturalise what was, in fact, a specifically middle-class discourse of social relations centred on the middle-class home and the perceived duties of the middle-class housewife.

The post-war decline in servant-keeping was an undoubted threat to the social identity of the middle classes, and to middle-class women in particular. The debates that took place in the 1940s were, in part, a response to the collective agency of working-class women who chose not to enter domestic service wherever and whenever there was an alternative. As such, the domestic organisation of the middle-class home became a focus for fierce struggles surrounding class identities: the idea of a world without servants was not conceded without a fight. *The English Middle Classes* is one manifestation of this struggle but similar discussions were carried on in Parliament, in the national newspapers, in books, on the radio and within the Civil Service, particularly in the Ministries of Health and Labour. What follows examines three specific examples of these debates.

The Seven Chars of Chelsea

In 1940, Celia Fremlin, an Oxford graduate, published a social survey of 'the servant problem' entitled *The Seven Chars of Chelsea*. Disguising herself as a maid-of-all-work, Fremlin took a number of jobs in different establishments in order to examine 'the peculiarities of the class structure of our society ... from the angle of domestic service'.[24] Fremlin not only observed and participated in the daily life of maids-of-all-work, 'chars', cooks and parlourmaids, but also received 211 responses to a questionnaire sent to mistresses, 160 of whom employed a single maid. Her intention, like those social explorers of late-Victorian London who visited the East End, was to reveal to the upper and middle classes the lives, experiences and attitudes of the poorer classes in the hope of activating reform.[25] Fremlin believed that people like herself could 'act to some slight extent as messengers and interpreters between the two worlds'.[26] The methods Fremlin used for collecting material for her study were very similar to those used by Mass Observation and as a consequence of *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* she was invited to become an observer for Mass Observation.[27] Fremlin appears to have been influenced by the political allegiance to social realism and documentary that characterised much writing and film-making of the late 1930s. George Orwell, Walter Greenwood, Mass Observation and documentary film-makers such as John Grierson were all concerned to represent and document the lives of the working class in attempts to generate more egalitarian and social democratic attitudes in Britain.[28] The significance of Fremlin's study of domestic service lies in her appropriation of the rhetoric of social realism and documentary in order to focus on an

institution that was of particular relevance to women. In addressing the wider questions of class through the lens of domestic service, she not only links class and gender but demonstrates very precisely how these relations were experienced in specific ways by women. It is made clear at the start that the implicit readership being addressed by Fremlin is those, mainly women, who employ domestic help of whatever kind:

> you would have no idea how to set about finding out from your charwoman what it feels like to live and work as she does. You would not know what questions to ask her, and she would not know how to answer them, not even what you were getting at. Deadlock would be reached in the second sentence.
>
> The trouble is that the two of you speak different languages; you think different thoughts; you live in different worlds. In a word, you belong to different classes in this British society of ours.[29]

Fremlin was born a generation later than Violet Markham, whose ideas will be considered in the next two sections. For a middle-class woman like Fremlin, coming to adulthood in the inter-war years, the whole issue of 'servant-keeping' was problematic. The increasing shortage of servants meant a continuing anxiety about keeping them; social democratic ideals determined that liberal mistresses should act in an egalitarian way towards their maids, that excessive deference was outdated and that friendly relationships were possible. For example, E.M. Delafield's *The Diary of a Provincial Lady* constructs an ironic and self-deprecating humour from the provincial lady's attempts to manage her servants whilst maintaining her own authority as mistress of the household.[30] Fremlin was not unaware of the tensions and strains that underpinned the relationships of domestic service and her survey was, at least in part, an attempt to dispel some of the fear and hostility that attended middle-class women's relations with their servants. The first half of *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* is written in the form of a series of quasi-fictional case studies, highlighting the kindliness, humour and friendship that Fremlin encountered in her work as a maid. The three case studies involve an upper-class household with many servants, a working-class boarding house, and working as a cleaner in a hospital. Employment in the boarding house and the hospital are represented more positively than the maid's job in the upper-class household, which is shown to be 'a shadowy, feudal' life.[31] Fremlin is concerned to contrast what she sees as the vitality of working-class women in non-residential domestic work with the wasted life of the residential maid:

> If she gets a good place in a large house her life may well be easier, safer, and more comfortable than those of her industrial contemporaries. She may remain safe and secure all her life long, out of hearing of the battles and the storms that the rest of the working class

> are facing. For economically she will be living in the world of feudalism, whose battles are long past; while the others of her class are living in the fighting, struggling world of capitalism.[32]

For Fremlin, socialism, undoubtedly encountered in her time as an undergraduate at Oxford, offered a means by which working-class men and women might struggle for equality in 'the fighting, struggling world of capitalism'.

The second half of the book analyses the issues raised by the case studies and discusses solutions to the problems that have been raised. The first step Fremlin advocated was supporting the Domestic Workers' Union (see note 4), established to regulate and standardise the conditions of domestic workers. Beyond that, however, her stated aim was to work for:

> a state of society in which maid and mistress are of the same class, with the same cultural background and the same education. The day they can work and laugh and struggle together – perhaps for two hours a day – perhaps for eighteen. Neither will bother to count, because both will be too much interested in the job for its own sake. Such a state of affairs can be realized almost within a generation. But it can be realized only by attacking the root and origin of class antagonism, not merely its symptoms.[33]

Fremlin's utopian vision was a woman-centred one but depended crucially on the removal of 'class antagonism'. For her, the symbol of an egalitarian society was the classless maid and mistress working together in domestic harmony. In order to achieve this, Fremlin argued, it would be necessary to 'work for an economic system in which all girls *are* your own class' – to 'do away with the form of society which ... forces even the best of employers to behave like a slave-driver; even the most willing of workmen to behave like an obstinate saboteur'.[34] However, until the day when 'class equality based on a genuine identity of interests becomes a reality in this country', *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* urged mistresses to support the Domestic Union.[35]

In offering solutions to the problems of domestic service, Fremlin was at pains to distance herself from militant trade unionism, perhaps recognising, rightly, that too fervent an advocacy of trade unionism would alienate those women of her own class. Despite the detailing of injustice and exploitation, *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* is ultimately concerned to persuade those women who employed domestic help that treating their employees in a 'business-like' manner was the most realistic solution to the current problems.[36] This, Fremlin claimed, was the only way to ensure that 'the mistress [will] be able to secure competent and willing service'.[37] *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* does not let mistresses off lightly: they are condemned for the snobbery and prejudice with which they treat their

servants. Yet, the overall intention of the survey was to persuade middle-class women that treating their servants in a humane and decent way with proper conditions of service was in their own interests. Fremlin, like Markham after her, believed that once domestic service was set on a professional footing, working-class women would willingly enter a profession that offered regulated hours and reasonable wages and middle-class women would receive the help they were entitled to. Moreover, Fremlin, whilst concerned for the well-being of domestic servants, never questioned the sexual division of labour within the home nor the right of some women to employ other women to carry out domestic work. She believed that women should work together to share domestic tasks and that the conditions under which domestic help was provided should be better, but her focus on dismantling 'class antagonism' took precedence over any analysis of the gendered nature of domesticity.

The Seven Chars of Chelsea was written in 1940 when many believed that the 'people's war' heralded the prospect of a 'people's peace' in which the barriers of class and prejudice would be dismantled finally. Fremlin's achievement was to appropriate the language and ideals of social egalitarianism in order to make visible the class inequalities that were reproduced daily, not in the public spaces of work, politics, leisure and education, but at the very heart of private (and feminised) life – the middle-class home. Ultimately, however, her commitment to improving the relationships between middle- and working-class women is undermined by her inability to imagine a world without domestic help. Fremlin ends her book by spelling out clearly the options available to middle-class women:

> You don't like the idea of the Union. You don't want to see the spirit of hostile Trade Unionism introduced permanently into your home. Very well. You have three alternatives clearly before you.
> You can employ girls of your own class. You will have to search long and hard for them.
> You can work for an economic system in which all girls are of your own class.
> You can put up with your servants as they are.
> These are the alternatives. You can take your choice.[38]

What Fremlin's rhetoric failed to grasp was the fact that whatever the conditions of service and however kindly the mistress, helping another woman with her housework for wages involved an unequal relationship. By contrast, working-class women grasped this point very well and were becoming increasingly able to reject what, for them, would always be 'servitude'. Joyce Storey recalls the 'terrible oath' she swore on leaving her first and only job as a maid:

> This is the last time in my entire bloody life I will ever do anyone's housework. Never again will I be on my knees with my nose to the ground for I belong up there with my eyes to the light and walking upright and tall.[39]

It was not only the opportunities for alternative employment that enabled working-class women to refuse any form of organised private domestic work but a growing sense of their own worth as workers and housewives. This was accelerated by the importance of women of all classes to the war effort but also by changes which positioned women as central to economic production and consumption.

Miriam Glucksmann has argued that the first half of the twentieth century witnessed a movement of working-class women out of domestic employment and into the production of commodities and services for purchase. At the same time, she claims, middle-class consumption of commodities and services was stimulated and the 'greater relative purchasing power of the middle class' became one of the markers of class identity rather than 'servantkeeping'.[40] These changes focus on women who were perceived as the new consumers of a post-industrial capitalism and, in patriarchal discourse, the guardians of the home where such consumption would increasingly occur. As such, working-class women played a key part in the social relations contingent upon such changes. As workers in factory production, they produced the vacuum cleaners, refrigerators and washing machines that enabled their erstwhile employers to run 'servantless' houses, and, as newly constituted housewives with homes of their own, they began, particularly after 1945, to purchase these commodities for themselves. Alison Ravetz has observed that by 1950 the term 'housewife' had come to denote:

> the middle-class wife [who] had finally and irrevocably lost her servants and the working-class wife [who] had gained, or was in the process of gaining, a whole house to look after.[41]

Fremlin's rhetoric of maid and mistress working alongside each other as equals expresses a specifically middle-class dream despite the quasi-socialist analysis of her case studies. Drawing on the rhetoric of liberalism, Fremlin's utopia is one in which 'all girls are of your own class'. Working-class women had different aspirations. As I have shown elsewhere, many working-class women dreamed of a home of their own, opportunities for part-time, rather than full-time, employment and the dignity that comes from performing socially useful work.[42] In the 1940s, and particularly in the post-war years, these aspirations appeared to be becoming material realities.

The National Institute of Homeworkers

In January 1943, Ernest Bevin, then Minister of Labour and National Service, wrote to Ernest Brown at the Ministry of Health proposing that a committee be established to:

> investigate the extent to which necessary domestic help is not available for private households and hospitals and institutions and to propose methods for making such help available during the war and in the transitional period at the end of the war.[43]

Bevin's proposal that ways should be found of making domestic help available during and after the War was not a new one. As early as 1941, the Ministry of Labour had initiated discussions on the possibility of setting up a National Service Orderly Corps to provide domestic help for various institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes and nurseries as well as for private households. The aim was to establish a quasi-military Corps akin to the women's services that could conscript a ready supply of domestic labour and appeal to women who wished to undertake some form of war work. Although the idea was perceived as fraught with difficulties, not least over whether members of such a Corps should wear a uniform, it was felt that:

> the formation of a Corps would raise the status of domestic work in national services and might improve recruitment by attracting women who at the moment were not subject to any form of compulsion from the Ministry of Labour and National Service (such as women with young children) and might also encourage women who registered to opt for domestic work.[44]

However, in 1943, pressure from the Ministry of Health and the Women's Consultative Committee caused Bevin to conclude that the needs of hospitals for domestic workers should take precedence over private households. As a result, it was decided that priority should be given to establishing 'a uniformed corps from which at a later stage help might be obtained for the private household when hardship arises from lack of domestic help in periods of sickness or confinement'.[45] In June 1943, Violet Markham, ex-chair of the Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment (see note 4) and the only woman to sit on the Home Office Aliens Committee, wrote to Bevin urging him to do something to alleviate 'the hardships to certain classes of private persons, e.g. the old, the young, the sick and women engaged on essential war duties, owing to the shortage of domestic help'.[46] As a result, although the National Service Orderly Corps was never established, Markham was charged by Bevin with conducting a survey and producing a report on the future of private domestic employment.

Born in 1872, Markham was the granddaughter of Joseph Paxton, her father was Managing Director of the Stavely Coal and Iron Company in

Chesterfield and she spent her childhood surrounded by domestic servants, some of whom provided the easy affection that appears to have been missing in her relationship with her mother.[47] From 1914 onwards, Markham sat on numerous committees, corresponded with a wide range of notable public figures and, whilst she never entered Parliament, was an influential figure in national and local politics until her death in 1959. Markham's success as a public figure was helped considerably by her ability to employ domestic help. For Markham, as for other women of her generation and class, actually doing housework was incomprehensible. She would no doubt have concurred with Woolf's observation that:

> [o]ne could not be Mrs. Giles of Durham because one's body had never stood at the wash-tub, one's hands had never wrung and scrubbed and chopped up whatever the meat may be that makes a miner's supper ... One sat in an armchair or read a book. One saw landscapes and seascapes.[48]

Markham's wartime letters to her sister-in-law bemoan the shortage of domestic help: '[t]here is something badly wrong with the whole organisation of society which lands housewives into the dreadful mess which afflicts women both in England and America', and complain that the 'strains are quite intolerable at the moment'.[49] After the war, she goes on to assert, 'the problem must be tackled if women are to have *any* peace and leisure'.[50] For Woolf and Markham, housework is the antithesis of creativity, leisure and intellectual thought. Both women were aware that their own identities as public figures and private individuals rested on a division of labour in which some women 'read a book' or 'saw landscapes and seascapes' whilst others 'stood at the washtub'.

Markham was in her seventies when she produced the *Report on the Post-War Organization of Private Domestic Employment*. Reading the Report's recommendations is to become aware of the ways in which her attempts to engage with the 'changed and more egalitarian outlook of the present day' were brought into tension with a middle-class consciousness formed in the context of Victorian and Edwardian social practices and ways of relating. The Report contextualises the present situation in terms of a traditional model of middle-class family life, rooted in the kind of Victorian homes that were soon to be improved by developments in household technology and replaced by the modern labour-saving homes built in the 1950s and 1960s:

> Family life among the middle and upper classes in this country has for generations rested largely on the assumption of domestic help of some kind being available. Unlike the US where that assumption only affects a very small minority of the population, most houses in this country have not been specially designed with mechanised devices to deal with a

> permanent shortage. The single-handed care of an old-fashioned house with stone passages, coal fires and an antiquated range has proved a heavy task during the war for a mistress bereft of her maids. There is much evidence of strain and consequent ill-health.[51]

Although the Report recognises that 'the burdens of working class women have for generations been notorious' and that some provision should be made to 'lighten the load of the working class mother', it is difficult to see how the final recommendations would have achieved this.[52] The Report's main concern remains the needs of 'the woman who can afford to pay for regular service' and whilst such women must be encouraged to offer better conditions and wages, the refusal of working-class women to enter domestic service is perceived, in large part, as a response to media caricatures of servants and the stigmatisation of service by other workers, rather than as a rational response to intolerable conditions of work.[53] Like Fremlin, Markham believed that the solution should be:

> a new and determined effort to regularise and popularise a form of employment which under rational conditions is both honourable to the worker and essential to the well being of the community.[54]

Bevin's original concern about help for private households and the Report that followed need to be seen in the wider context of the challenges presented by the mobilisation of women for the war effort from 1941 onwards. The conscription of women into the services and into industry, which had begun with the National Services (No. 2) Act in 1941, introduced the category of 'mobile' women to identify women free of domestic responsibilities who could be moved from their homes to areas of need if required. Penny Summerfield has argued that 19% of women transferred, under this Act, to 'essential' work were 'labourers and domestic servants' but opportunities for war work undoubtedly enabled countless others to escape the servitude of service.[55] Women like Pam C, whose mistress attempted to keep her by arguing that domestic drudgery to a demanding mistress for low wages was an honourable way of serving her country, felt that the war offered them the means of escape from a job they hated.[56] Whilst the Government was committed to the increasing mobilisation of women as a necessary prelude to winning the war, this co-existed and, at times, conflicted with traditional beliefs about women's 'natural' sphere.[57] Anxieties about the potential disruptions to family life caused by wartime circumstances manifested themselves in concerns about the effects of women's war work, female mobility, and the lack of domestic help for middle-class women. Bevin believed the provision of domestic help to be 'one of our most difficult problems' and one which was exacerbated by the increasing mobilisation of women for the war effort:

> our mobilisation of woman-power has reached a pitch where I fear we are inflicting undue hardship on individual households particularly where there are sick people and children.[58]

The fear that the encouragement, indeed compulsion, of women to become 'mobile' might prise women away from, even shatter, their traditional links with and obligations to domesticity, be it as wives and mothers or domestic servants, lay behind the anxieties about domestic help. The *Report on the Post-War Organization of Private Domestic Employment* was informed by these concerns and, in important ways, contributed to the formations of 'femininity' and class that emerged in the post-war period. The rhetoric of post-war pronatalism and concerns for the stability of the family, beset by the upheavals of war, maps onto both gender and class and can be traced in the Report.[59] For example, whilst it was acknowledged that men should be encouraged to take responsibility for household tasks and 'home duties', there was no allusion to this aspect of domesticity in the final summary of recommendations.[60] At the same time, the rationale for the Report's recommendations made it very clear that the problem was about women and their role in a post-war society: 'behind domestic problems stands the greater issue of the birth rate and our menaced existence as a great nation'.[61] Women who cannot share their husband's leisure or be a companion because of excessive domestic duties 'will not undertake the burden of childbearing'.[62]

Women were perceived as both the problem and the solution: as 'mobile' workers, they were essential to the economy *and* threatened the stability of the home. As mothers in the home (and it is important to note how worker and mother were always kept separate in the conceptual vocabulary of the period), women reproduced the next generation but, it was believed, required practical help if they were to be persuaded to undertake this task. In class terms, middle-class and working-class mothers were perceived differently. Implicit in the debates of this period was the assumption that the provision of help for middle-class mothers should be a priority. Because it was believed that 'most of the nation's brains, leadership and organizing ability' were to be found in the middle classes, it was assumed that waged domestic workers on at least a daily basis would be required for middle-class homes.[63] On the other hand, local authority provided, means-tested Home Helps should be made available for those working-class mothers who, because of sickness or other emergencies, were temporarily unable to fulfil their domestic duties.[64] In order to ensure a continuing supply of domestic help for middle-class households, the Report recommended that a National Institute of Homeworkers be established to provide a six-month training for women and girls in local centres (with maintenance allowances), after which they would be placed in approved households. The Report also recommended that in order to offset the high

cost of employing trained workers, which would put domestic help beyond the reach of most middle-class families, the wages of domestic workers should be deductible from the employer's income prior to tax levels being assessed.

The post-war Labour Government adopted the Report's recommendation to establish a National Institute of Homeworkers. In the event, this was never fully established due to difficulties over finding suitable premises. More significant, in the long term, the recommended tax allowances were never implemented. As a result, the high cost of employing trained domestic help allied to the continuing refusal of women to consider domestic work as a full-time occupation resulted in a pattern whereby those who could afford it increasingly employed cheaper, non-residential, part-time help.

Reading Markham's private life alongside her public pronouncements in the Report is to become aware of a tension in the assumptions that underpin the arguments for domestic help. In her own life, the employment of domestic servants was represented as the means by which a childless middle-class woman, like herself, could take up public work. In the Report and in the round table discussion which I consider next, middle-class women are represented as wives and mothers who require help in order to cope with the 'burden' of childbearing, child-rearing and domestic obligations. It is never suggested that rethinking domestic organisation might enable women to participate in public affairs, to take up careers or enter paid employment outside the home.

'Help for Housewives'

In April 1946, the BBC Home Service broadcast a round table discussion on domestic help, chaired by Markham. This programme was undoubtedly orchestrated in order to publicise and popularise the ideas that underpinned the Government's intention to establish a National Institute of Homeworkers. Markham concluded the broadcast with a rallying cry to women:

> This [domestic help] is really a problem for women. Because it is a field where women have exploited women in the past. And if the difficulty of getting the housework done is not solved, women will not be able to make their contribution in the world. This is the test today: can women share the work of the home, no longer on any basis of condescension or rank, but on terms of justice and mutual respect and independence? So that 'service' will cease to be considered a badge of inferiority but will find its true place as a princely motive for the enrichment of life. Above all we want family life with its loyalties and affections to be made safe,

> and home – not an apartment house or a residential hotel – the centre of it.[65]

Women's 'contribution in the world' is here represented as securing home and family life rather than participating in public affairs or employment. The selection of participants and the topics debated reinforced this underlying message – in the post-war world, citizenship for women would focus on their role in the family.

The discussion involved four women categorised in the transcript of the broadcast as 'middle-class housewives', two women categorised as 'working-class housewives', three women categorised as 'domestic workers', and a representative of the National Union of Domestic Workers. All those with children are identified as 'housewives' and as far as it is possible to tell from the transcript, none of these worked outside the home either part- or full-time. Yet, figures of the period show that approximately 5,710,000 women were working either full- or part-time in 1946.[66] Markham herself, whilst never a salaried employee, influenced national and local politics, sitting on numerous committees, lecturing in France and Germany after the War and working in a voluntary capacity for women's organisations like the CCWTE. Nevertheless, the middle-class women in the discussion are represented as full-time housewives in need of domestic help in order to cope with the demands of motherhood:

> Mrs. Smith [middle-class housewife]: I've four children, three of school age, but they can't stay to lunch at school, so I have lunch for four children and dinner again at night for my husband. I can't even get daily help. I've only got Nanny after about a three months' wait, costing about £20, from Ireland. She wants to leave but doesn't want to leave me stranded.[67]

In the context of this debate, the issue of domestic help is linked to the needs of women identified as mothers in the home rather than to their needs as workers. Moreover, the middle-class women selected for the discussion are models of pro-natalist rhetoric. Mrs Smith has four children, and Mrs Serpell uses the language of pro-natalist thought to justify her need for domestic help:

> Mrs. Serpell [middle-class housewife]: I've got two small children. When you are trying to cope with two toddlers, trying to bring them up to become more or less *rational citizens*, it's almost impossible to cope with all the housework yourself ... I personally feel I don't want to have more than two in my family unless I'm sure of getting somebody to help. (emphasis added) [68]

Mrs Proctor, on the other hand, is also categorised as a 'housewife' but represents herself as a 'different' kind of housewife – a 'working-man's wife' with two children:

> Mrs. Proctor [working-class housewife]: I'm just a working-man's wife and I'm on seven or eight different committees, social welfare, chairman of schools [*sic*], and so on. I've two children – I'll admit there's twelve years between them – but it never dawned on me that I wanted help. I always managed, and I think I can face up with any one round this table for sixty-nine years of age.[69]

Throughout the discussion, Mrs Proctor only speaks four times and when she does it is to ask what help is envisaged for working-class women, a question to which she never receives an adequate reply. Mrs Silver, the other 'working-class housewife', speaks three times and her remarks suggest that she herself was once a domestic servant, thus blurring the boundaries the programme attempts to establish between working-class housewives and domestic workers. The greater part of the discussion is carried on between the 'middle-class housewives' and the 'domestic workers', and covers wages, time off, uniforms, living-in and the difficulties of negotiating what is 'a very close and often very difficult personal relationship' between mistress and maid.[70] The structure of the discussion appears to be to hear and acknowledge the complaints of domestic servants and then to reveal via Markham as chair the proposals for ameliorating these. In the process, the pleasures of housework and running a home are extolled by the domestic workers and reiterated by Mrs Silver:

> Dunkley [domestic worker]: As a domestic worker – not servant, please, ladies – you do develop a sense of responsibility. It is not like repetition work in a factory. Domestic work is creative. You can see something growing under your fingers: the well-polished floor, the beautiful brass, the well-kept china and all those hundred-and-one details which go to make the home not merely a house or a domestic museum ...
>
> Silver [working-class housewife]: Yes, there is always something going on that you really would not get in a factory, especially where there are children. You get a wonderful variety.
>
> Ayris [domestic worker]: I would not wish to do anything else ...I do not think there is anything more marvellous than running a house and cooking a meal.[71]

Mrs Smith (middle-class housewife) responds, 'That sounds better. Surely we women can co-operate to help each other'. Mrs Smith's words function at this point to reassure any middle-class housewives listening to the programme whose dislike of and anxiety about servants may have been confirmed by the earlier 'militancy' of the domestic workers. The intended message is that maid and mistress *can* work together despite their differences in a spirit of tolerance and fair play. Yet, this apparent egalitarianism is achieved only at the point at which the domestic workers

and a working-class housewife confess their love of domestic work, thus 'proving' that the 'lower classes' are 'naturally' suited to undertake housework. Mrs Proctor contributes to this assumption when she insisted earlier in the debate that *she* had never felt the need for help with housework, whereas, as Mrs Serpell (middle-class housewife) points out:

> It's very hard when women have at last come into their own and realise they have got a brain and there are things they can do other than domestic work, if they never have time to sit down and read a book. I don't want sherry parties or to play bridge, but your brain just becomes stagnant when you do nothing but housework.[72]

In the light of the foregoing discussion, when Markham concludes by claiming that 'if the difficulty of getting the housework done is not solved, women will not be able to make their contribution in the world', it is very clear, if not explicitly stated, which women will be doing the housework and which will be making 'their contribution in the world'.[73] Markham's notes for the programme reveal that, despite her genuine concern for greater opportunities for working-class women, she remains wedded to a traditional hierarchy in which '[n]o [presumably working-class] girl can be better employed than in helping another woman to bring up her children & [*sic*] make home comfortable for the breadwinner'.[74] The fact that Mrs Proctor served on numerous committees and ran a home without any domestic help is ignored. Indeed, I suspect the representation of working-class housewives by the figure of Mrs Proctor is intended to demonstrate that working-class women do not really require daily help in the home. The proposals for helping working-class women amounted to extending the voluntary home help schemes that already existed in order to provide relief at times of sickness and pregnancy. Interestingly, this was the one recommendation of the Report that was eventually implemented in the post-war period.

Markham's proposals for providing more domestic help met with a degree of scepticism and anxiety from the middle-class housewives. One concern was the cost: trained domestic workers would command a rate similar to that paid to women in factory work. Another concern was that of 'overtraining'. Mrs Smith pointed out that 'not all housework is skilled work. Cooking undoubtedly is, but is making a bed? Isn't there a great deal of help we get from the girls of an unskilled type?'[75] This is in direct opposition to Miss Dunkley, who, earlier in the discussion, insisted that '[d]omestic work is creative' and continued by extolling the pleasures of polishing and cleaning furniture, china and brass. These distinctions formed the conceptual framework within which the practices of housework were given value and meaning. Those tasks that required physical 'brawn' – scrubbing, washing, polishing – were distinguished in middle-class consciousness from those that might involve thought and artistry – cooking, decorating, sewing. It should not be surprising, therefore, given the homology middle class–

working class/mind–body that those tasks defined as physical were the very tasks for which middle-class women continued to demand help. The discussion reveals the irreconcilable tensions surrounding the meanings of housework, which were variously understood as creative (the domestic workers), unskilled (the middle-class housewives), or practical necessity (Mrs Proctor). Working-class women were making an entirely rational choice when they rejected a form of employment that not only deprived them of their independence but continued to value the tasks involved on terms not of their choosing. Markham was right to recognise that any scheme for recruiting domestic workers required a revaluing of domestic work. However, neither Markham nor the middle-class housewives taking part in the 'Help for Housewives' debate could or would willingly choose to think beyond the structures of middle-class subjectivity that understood the daily routines of housework as alien and 'other'. As Naomi Mitchison commented, recalling her childhood, 'tidying and washing up was just left. In the morning it was done. One was unfamiliar with the process. Dusters, soap, soda? These belonged to another world'.[76] Markham's final words, in which she hopes that '"service" will cease to be considered a badge of inferiority but will find its true place as a princely motive for the enrichment of life', were little more than the rhetorical flourish of a system struggling to survive.

Conclusion

The anxieties about domestic service that surfaced again and again throughout the first half of the century reached a peak in the late 1940s. There are a number of reasons why the debates, which were the public manifestations of these anxieties, repay careful attention. First, the discussions about domestic help demonstrate very clearly that one of the markers of class identity that distinguished women from each other was housework. In 1901, B.S. Rowntree had identified 'servantkeeping' as 'marking the division between the working classes and those of a higher social scale'.[77] In 1946, this was a distinction that was becoming difficult to sustain, as fewer households were able to employ servants. Class differences, far from being dissolved as the egalitarian rhetoric of the period implied, were in the process of being reformulated and housework was a key factor in this process. The increased economic and social independence of working-class women during the war, allied to their continuing refusal to enter domestic service, was a source of anxiety to observers. Commentators saw in the apparent hedonism and lack of responsibility of young working-class women the potential to disrupt not only traditional gender ideologies but also the hierarchies of class.[78]

In the discussion about *The Seven Chars of Chelsea*, I drew attention to Ravetz's claim that by 1950 the figure of the housewife, much deployed in women's magazines, newspapers and official reports, included middle-class women running servantless homes and working-class women with homes of their own. However, the representation of the housewife, as is evident from the BBC discussion, was not as classless as Ravetz suggests. Beneath the rhetoric of egalitarianism and social democracy, it is possible to detect a fierce struggle on the part of middle-class women to reformulate a set of distinguishing markers that would continue to assert their difference from and superiority to 'the wives of working-men'. The home continued to be the central locus of this struggle but the meanings attributed to housework, rather than 'servantkeeping' itself, became key signifiers of social identity. Middle-class women, forced by the lack of servants to do their own housework, found themselves unprepared 'for the relentless boredom of scrubbing floors and ironing shirts'.[79] Moreover, the legacy of domestic service meant that working-class women remained linked in the minds of middle-class women with the drudgery of housework. Thus, those tasks that could be conceptualised as creative homemaking – cooking, sewing, decorating – became acceptable ways of spending time whilst 'the rough' (scrubbing, washing, polishing) continued to be seen as 'wasted time'.[80] In saying this, I am not trying to deny the drudgery and tedium that can accompany housework. What I am concerned to do is to demonstrate the ways in which 'homemaking' and 'housework' came to be understood differently and the ways in which those understandings were (and continue to be) linked with ideas about class and status.

Secondly, the debates over domestic service in the late 1940s reveal the very real tensions for liberal-minded middle-class women as they attempted to reconcile their commitment to egalitarianism and social reform with an equally powerful need to maintain social markers and boundaries. In her autobiography, written in 1953, Violet Markham, who was a lifelong member of the Liberal Party with a particular interest in education and training for working-class women, wrote, '[t]here is an unresolved conflict taking place in many minds today between a desire for greater social equality and the half-reluctant recognition of the need for an *élite*'.[81]As I have argued, for middle-class women, this 'need for an *élite*' found expression in the discourses of home and housework. However, discussions about how domestic work was to be organised and who was to do it were part of a wider debate about the role and place of women in post-war society: 'Women in large measure fail to recognize how much their own future as independent beings turns on finding some solution of [*sic*] the problem of domestic help'.[82] Markham recognised that the struggle for equality for women in the public world of politics and the professions was inextricably linked to their perceived duties and obligations in the private

world of home and family. Nevertheless, in the Report and in the debate on the BBC, Markham was at pains to stress the importance of women's role in maintaining family life. Born in the 1870s, Markham's life and career straddled two worlds. Strongly influenced, as a young woman, by her mother's traditional beliefs, Markham always had one foot in Victorianism. Yet, the changing world of the twentieth century developed in her a lifelong commitment to educational reforms to enable middle-class women to take up new job opportunities. At the same time, she advocated traditional occupations, particularly domestic service, for working-class women but on a regularised and skilled basis. The uneven mixture of conservative, feminist and liberal thought in her concern for and ambivalence about domestic reorganisation is testament to the varied sources from which she drew her political beliefs. However, Markham's concern for women as women was always fatally undermined by her overriding commitment to her class and the maintenance of social barriers that would meet 'the need for an *élite*'.

Thirdly, neither *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* nor the Report question the assumption that 'home duties' are women's responsibility, or the right of some women to employ other women to help maintain their homes and family life. Privately, Markham viewed the employment of working-class women as domestic servants as a means by which middle-class women like herself might be enabled to take up professional careers and public work. Despite her socialist leanings, Fremlin implicitly assumes that middle-class women will wish and need to continue employing servants after the war. However, there are generational differences. Fremlin was educated at a girls' secondary school and Somerville College, Oxford. Markham received one year's formal education in her late teens but, like most women of her generation, was expected to devote herself to the limiting life of a middle-class 'lady'. Fremlin believed that the injustices of domestic service were allied to the oppressions of capitalism and could only be remedied by attacking what she called 'class antagonism'. Such ideas would not have found favour with Markham, who believed in a world based on the structures of deference and dependence that Fremlin attacks in *The Seven Chars of Chelsea*. Fremlin's ideal domestic worker is the independently minded 'char' working on a daily basis: Markham's ideal is the residential but skilled maid who takes pride in cleaning someone else's belongings. However, the difficulty of imagining a world without domestic help was common to both Fremlin and Markham. For both women, the question was how domestic help should be organised in the post-war world. As a result, neither was able to address adequately the causes and obstacles that made it problematic for *all* women 'to make their contribution in the world'. Instead, both women drew on a well-established rhetoric and vocabulary of optimism that represented the problems that existed between mistresses and maids as ones that could be solved by greater cooperation between classes. Such

cooperation, it was believed, would evolve from the 'common sufferings and tribulations shared by all alike during the war' and the result would be a reformed form of egalitarian domestic service.[83]

Throughout the immediate post-war period, numerous schemes were floated for alleviating the burden on the housewife. The National Federation of Women's Institutes recommended that married ex-dairymaids be recruited to work for farmers' wives; the Ministry of Health attempted to recruit part-time 'home helps' from amongst married women at home in the wake of doctors' reports of an increase in 'nervous troubles' amongst mothers of young families; and under the European Volunteer Workers' Scheme, domestic agencies might recruit migrant female labour to help in private households, particularly those of doctors, clergymen, dentists and farmers, as well as in hospitals and hostels.[84] Yet, despite Government initiatives and official enthusiasm for the continuance of domestic service in some form, usually envisaged as part-time and non-residential, there was a continued reluctance on the part of working-class women to take up such work. The circumstances of full employment from the late 1940s onwards and the expansion of part-time opportunities enabled many women to move up the occupational ladder into office and shop work and away from domestic service both in private homes and public institutions. A decade or so later, the frustrations of middle-class educated women, trapped, as they saw it, in domesticity, fuelled the re-emergence of a strong feminist movement. Once again, one of the most forcefully argued issues was how educated women could pursue professional careers whilst constrained by certain expectations about their domestic obligations. Once again, this debate rendered the desires and needs of working-class women invisible. Women's relationship to the home is central to an understanding of gender but feminist analyses need also to expose the part played by class and generation in reproducing the divisions between women that, so often, have their roots in past understandings of home and domesticity.

Notes

[1] Hermione Lee (1997) *Virginia Woolf*, pp. 238-239 (London: Vintage).

[2] Virginia Woolf (1924) Character in Fiction, cited in Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 239.

[3] See C. Black (1918) *A New Way of Housekeeping* (London: Collins); C.V. Butler (1916) *Domestic Service: an enquiry by the Women's Industrial Council* (London: G. Bell); Fabian Society Women's Group Papers (1914) Committee to Reorganize Domestic Work, Nuffield College Library, Oxford. For a discussion of these initiatives, see C. Dyhouse (1989) *Feminism and the Family 1880-1939*, pp. 107-144 (Oxford: Blackwell).

[4] The Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment (CCWTE) provided domestic service training schemes for unemployed working-class

women in urban industrial areas from 1921 onwards. The Domestic Workers Union was set up in 1938 and attempted to regulate wages and conditions of service. The Union was mainly based in London and its membership even in 1940 remained small. The Charter laid down minimum wages for resident, non-resident and part-time workers, rules about accommodation, uniform, visitors and food, as well as holiday entitlements.

[5] Celia Fremlin (1940) *The Seven Chars of Chelsea* (London: Methuen); Violet Markham & Florence Hancock (1945) *Report on the Post-War Organization of Domestic Employment*, Cmnd 6650, Public Records Office (PRO); Help for Housewives, BBC Home Service debate (1946), *The Listener*.

[6] E. James (1962) Women and Work in Twentieth Century Britain, Manchester School of Economics and Social Science, XXX, September, p. 291.

[7] Alan Jackson (1991) *The Middle Classes 1900-1950*, p. 344 (Nairn, Scotland: David St John Thomas Publisher). James, 'Women and Work in Twentieth Century Britain', p. 291.

[8] Pamela Horn (1975) *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (London: Gill & Macmillan); Jackson, *The Middle Classes 1900-1950*; Theresa McBride (1976) *The Domestic Revolution: the modernisation of household service in England and France 1820-1920* (London: Croom Helm); Pam Taylor (1979) Daughters and Mothers – Maids and Mistresses: domestic service between the wars, in J. Clarke, C. Crichter & R. Johnson (Eds) *Working-Class Culture: studies in history and theory* (London: Hutchinson).

[9] Pam Taylor (1978) Women Domestic Servants, 1919-1939: the final phase, unpublished MA thesis, University of Birmingham.

[10] All the texts cited in note 8 argue that increased opportunities in shop, factory and office work made it possible for women to reject domestic service as an employment choice.

[11] Young women from the depressed areas, from rural areas and from Ireland, where opportunities were fewer, continued to migrate to the centres of affluence in the Midlands and South-east, to seaside and spa resorts, and to the residential areas of large cities like Birmingham and London.

[12] Roy Lewis & Angus Maude (1949) *The English Middle Classes*, pp. 159-175 (London: Penguin); Jackson, *The Middle Classes 1900-1950*, pp. 330-331.

[13] Lewis & Maude, *The English Middle Classes*, p. 172.

[14] Ibid.

[15] *The Lady*, 10 April 1930, 11 April 1940, 12 April 1945, 5 January 1950, 13 April 1950.

[16] Fremlin, *The Seven Chars of Chelsea*; Markham & Hancock, *Report on the Post-War Organisation of Private Domestic Employment*.

[17] Judy Giles (1995) *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain 1900-50*, pp. 132-164 (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

[18] Naomi Mitchison (1979) *You May Well Ask*, p. 28 (London: Gollancz).

[19] Lewis & Maude, *The English Middle Classes*, p. 204.

[20] Ibid., p. 205.

[21] Ibid., p. 206.

[22] Ibid., p. 207.

[23] Ibid., p. 206.

[24] Fremlin, *The Seven Chars of Chelsea*, p. 7.

[25] P.J. Keating (1976) *Into Unknown England 1866-1913: selections from the social explorers*, pp. 65-66 (London: Fontana).

[26] Ibid., p. 2.

[27] Correspondence with Dorothy Sheridan, Archivist, Mass Observation Archives, University of Sussex.

[28] George Orwell (1987 reprint edition) *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Harmondsworth: Penguin; first published 1937, London: Victor Gollancz); Walter Greenwood (1993 reprint edition) *Love on the Dole* (London: Vintage; first published 1933, London: Jonathan Cape). For the documentary film movement, see John Baxendale & Chris Pawling (1996) *Narrating the Thirties, a Decade in the Making: 1930 to the present*, pp. 17-45 (Basingstoke: Macmillan). For Mass Observation, see Angus Calder & Dorothy Sheridan (Eds) (1984) *Speak for Yourself: a Mass-Observation anthology 1937-49*, pp. 2-6 (London: Jonathan Cape).

[29] Fremlin, *The Seven Chars of Chelsea*, p. 2.

[30] E.M. Delafield (1930) *The Diary of a Provincial Lady*, cited in Giles (1995) *Women, Identity and Private Life*, p. 148.

[31] Fremlin, *The Seven Chars of Chelsea*, p. 150.

[32] Ibid., pp. 149-150.

[33] Ibid., p. 177.

[34] Ibid., pp. 174-178.

[35] Ibid., pp. 175-176.

[36] Ibid., p. 161.

[37] Ibid., p. 161.

[38] Ibid., pp. 177-178.

[39] Joyce Storey (1992 reprint edition) *Our Joyce*, p. 104 (London: Virago; first published 1987, Bristol: Bristol Broadsides).

[40] Miriam Glucksmann (1990) *Women Assemble: women workers and the new industries in inter-war Britain*, p. 254 (London: Routledge).

[41] Alison Ravetz (1989) A View From the Interior, in Judy Attfield & Pat Kirkham (Eds) *A View From the Interior: feminism, women and design*, p. 189 (London: The Women's Press).

[42] Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life*, pp. 64-95.

[43] Ernest Bevin to Ernest Brown, 26 January 1943: PRO Lab70.

[44] Ministry of Health minute, 23 September 1942 PRO LAB70.

[45] Proposal by Ernest Bevin, 5 July 1943, PRO LAB70.

[46] Violet Markham to Ernest Bevin, 8 June 1943, in Helen Jones (Ed.) (1994) *Duty and Citizenship: the correspondence and political papers of Violet Markham, 1896-1953*, p. 173 (London: The Historian's Press).

[47] Violet Markham (1953) *Return Passage*, pp. 18-43 (London: Oxford University Press).

[48] Virginia Woolf, in Introduction to Margaret Llewellyn Davies (1977 reprint edition) *Life As We Have Known It*, p. xxiii (London: Virago; first published 1931).

[49] Violet Markham to Nan Carruthers, 21 January 1945, in Jones, *Duty and Citizenship*, p. 180.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Markham & Hancock, *Report on the Post-War Organization of Private Domestic Employment*, p. 7.

[52] Ibid., p. 7.

[53] Ibid., p. 7.

[54] Ibid., p. 8.

[55] Penny Summerfield (1993) Women and Social Changes in the Second World War, in B. Brivati & H. Jones (Eds) *What Difference Did the War Make?* p. 68 (Leicester: Leicester University Press).

[56] Interview with Pam C carried out by Lindsey Murray-Twinn, April 1994.

[57] Penny Summerfield (1996) 'The Girl That Makes the Thing That Drills the Hole That Holds the Spring...' Discourses of Women and Work in the Second World War, in C. Gledhill & G. Swanson (Eds) *Nationalising Femininity: culture, sexuality and the British cinema in the Second World War*, pp. 35-52 (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

[58] Ernest Bevin to Ernest Brown, 26 January 1943, PRO LAB70.

[59] See Denise Riley (1983) *War in the Nursery: theories of the child and mother*, pp. 150-196 (London: Virago).

[60] Markham & Hancock, *Report on the Post-War Organization of Private Domestic Employment*, p. 17.

[61] Ibid., p. 18.

[62] Ibid., p. 18.

[63] Lewis & Maude, *The English Middle Classes*, subtitle.

[64] Markham & Hancock, *Report on the Post-War Organization of Private Domestic Employment*, p. 7.

[65] *The Listener* (1946) Transcript of BBC Home Service discussion, 'Help for Housewives', 11 April, p. 466.

[66] G.D.H. Cole cited in Riley, *War in the Nursery*, p. 146.

[67] *The Listener*, p. 464.

[68] Ibid., p. 464.

[69] Ibid., p. 464.

[70] Ibid., p. 465.

[71] Ibid., pp. 465-466.

[72] Ibid., p. 465.

[73] Ibid., p. 466.

[74] Jones, *Duty and Citizenship*, p. 189.

[75] Ibid., p. 466.

[76] Naomi Mitchison (1975) *All Change Here* (London: Bodley Head), cited in C. Dyhouse, *Feminism and the Family*, p. 107.

[77] B. Seebohm Rowntree (1901) *Poverty, a Study of Town Life*, p. 14 (London: Macmillan).

[78] See, for example, Pearl Jephcott (1943) *Girls Growing Up* (London: Faber).

[79] Hannah Gavron (1968 reprint edition) *The Captive Wife*, p. 132 (Harmondsworth: Penguin; first published 1966, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

[80] Ibid., p. 132.

[81] Markham, *Return Passage*, p. 33.

[82] Ibid., p. 33.

[83] Markham & Hancock, *Report on the Post-War Organization of Private Domestic Employment*, p. 21.

[84] The EVW schemes were set up to recruit women to domestic work in public institutions such as sanatoria and hospitals. There were rules limiting the kind of households that could apply to employ these workers. See Wendy Webster (1998) *Imagining Home: gender 'race' and national identity, 1945-64*, pp. 32-39 (London: UCL); Alison Settle (28 April 1946, 21 July 1946, 6 October 1946) From a Woman's Viewpoint, in *The Observer*; Notes from anonymous reader.

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